

HOUSING

Housing is recognized as a critical component of the transition from foster care to independent living. The South Dakota Department of Social Services' Division of Child Protection Services continues to provide financial support to youth who have been in the care of the Department in these three programs: *Stepping Stones*, *Volunteers of America-Dakotas*, and *McCrossan Boys Ranch*. For more information on housing assistance, please contact the local Community Resource People in your area.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE

NORTHERN AREA

Agency: Volunteers of America

Phone: (605) 262-1007

Cell Phone: (605) 380-5488

Serving: Aberdeen, Huron, Mobridge, Sisseton, Sisseton-Wahpeton and Watertown

CENTRAL AREA

Agency: Volunteers of America

Phone: (605) 280-9580

Serving: Chamberlain, Eagle Butte, Mission, Mitchell, Pierre, Winner

WESTERN AREA

Agency: Stepping Stones

Phone: (605) 388-8195

Serving: Custer, Deadwood, Hot Springs, Martin, Pine Ridge, Rapid City, Belle Fourche and Sturgis

EASTERN AREA

Agency: Volunteers of America

Phone: (605) 274-3617

Cell Phone: (605) 212-8338

Serving: Brookings, Sioux Falls, Vermillion, Yankton and Lake Andes

FOR MORE INFORMATION

PHONE:

(605) 773-3227

WEBSITE:

www.dss.sd.gov/cps/independentlivingprogram

Independent Living Program

Provides services for youth in foster care or for youth who have been in foster care in South Dakota.

DSS 
Strong Families - South Dakota's Foundation and Our Future

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

In today's world, becoming independent can be a scary process. There are so many resources available that it can be easy to feel confused or overwhelmed. It can even be difficult trying to figure out where to get started. The Independent Living Program provides many services for teens in foster care or for teens who have been in foster care. This brochure explains what is available to help foster youth transition into independent living.

STARTER KIT

Teens age 16 to 18 have the chance to earn expense money as they leave foster care. By participating in the Independent Living Program, teens can earn money through incentives and activities such as:

- ✓ Attending classes or workshops
- ✓ Working with Community Resource People
- ✓ Receiving their high school diploma or GED
- ✓ Other positive behaviors

When youth leave foster care, the special funds earned are available to help them become independent.

YOUTH ORGANIZER

A Youth Organizer has been developed for teens age 16 and older leaving the foster care program. The Youth Organizer is designed to help teens gather the information they need as they move out on their own. It contains 13 sections for keeping a variety of personal information.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

Teen Conference

The Teen Conference is a four-day event held every summer to give youth an opportunity to experience and gain knowledge of independent living skills. During the conference, youth stay in a dorm to get a feel for what college might be like. Activities include hands-on skills, completing applications and job interviews, inspirational speakers, workshops and social events.

Workshops

Workshops are held twice a year across the state to provide teens with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for successful independent living. The one-day workshops are open to teens age 15 to 18. Pre-registration is required.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program provides funding to assist South Dakota foster youth with continued education and training after high school or a GED certificate. ETV funds are financial assistance that can aid youth in reaching their goals and achieving successful independence through education and training. If eligible, a youth in foster care could receive up to \$5,000 a year to attend college or vocational school or to learn a trade.

Eligibility

Current and former foster youth eligible for Independent Living Program services are eligible for ETV funds. A youth in foster care must have a financial need to receiving funding. To receive ETV funds:

- ✓ Must have a high school diploma, GED Certificate of Completion, or equivalent.
- ✓ Be age 18 or older when beginning a post-secondary or vocational school program.
- ✓ Be enrolled in or accepted to a post-secondary or vocational school program.
- ✓ If youth are applying for a second time around, they must be making satisfactory progress (minimum of 2.0 GPA) and provide a copy of a transcript verifying their GPA in order to receive continuing assistance.
- ✓ A foster youth must have been adopted at age 16 or older or been in an out-of-home placement and left foster care at age 18 or older.

Applying: Required Information

- ✓ A one-page essay describing qualifications for a scholarship based on academic performance, financial need, and a plan for education.
- ✓ A copy of acceptance letter from the college or vocational school.
- ✓ A cover letter from the youth's family services specialist or adoptive parent.
- ✓ Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), American Collegiate Test (ACT), or Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test scores as required by the school.
- ✓ A copy of Free Application for Student Financial Assistance (FAFSA), if appropriate.
- ✓ "Cost of Attendance" completed and signed by the financial aid officer.

If approved for ETV funding, youth must re-apply every semester. A requirement is to submit a transcript of the prior semester's grades with a minimum 2.0 grade point average, a letter describing how the money was used and why financial assistance is needed to continue.